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HOUSE MEMORIAL 14

**48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2007**

INTRODUCED BY

Nick L. Salazar

A MEMORIAL

URGING THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE THE ACEQUIA DE CHAMITA IN THE NEW MEXICO STATE REGISTER OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND NOMINATE THE ACEQUIA DE CHAMITA FOR PLACEMENT ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.

WHEREAS, the colonist Don Juan de Onate called upon his men and fifteen Ohkay Owingeh villagers to dig the first irrigation system of Iberian-Arabic design in New Mexico on August 11, 1598; and

WHEREAS, the Acequia de Chamita, as the irrigation system has become known, is still in common use by the people of Ohkay Owingeh and the community of Chamita; and

WHEREAS, the map dated 1602 and created by Enrico Martinez depicting "Onate's kingdom" indicates the settlement of Sama at San Gabriel del Yungue, now known as Chamita; and

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1           WHEREAS, in "Monarquín Indiana", the seventeenth century  
2 Franciscan scholar Fray Juan de Torquemada states in 1602 the  
3 importance of the new form of irrigated agriculture and  
4 describes the settlement of San Gabriel del Yunque, located  
5 between the Rio Chama and the Rio Grande, as having irrigated  
6 fields of wheat, barley and corn and within the settlement the  
7 remainder of the food for the community is cultivated in  
8 gardens, all served by the Acequia de Chamita; and

9           WHEREAS, the gravity-flow earthen canal system for  
10 irrigation that was constructed along the Rio Grande and Rio  
11 Chama began the spread of civil and social "water democracy"  
12 throughout the southwestern part of what became the United  
13 States and the acequias served as the lifeblood for community  
14 development for thousands of civilian settlers or pobladores;  
15 and

16           WHEREAS, in New Mexico alone, the system of acequias has  
17 grown to exceed one thousand acequias within the state, all  
18 carrying the imprint of the Acequia de Chamita; and

19           WHEREAS, a map of the town of Chamita from the 1877 field  
20 notes of United States surveyors Sawyer and McElroy show the  
21 Chamita land grant indicating the Acequia de Chamita starting  
22 from the Rio Chama and emptying into the Rio Chama above its  
23 confluence with the Rio Grande; and

24           WHEREAS, very few significant changes since it was first  
25 constructed are seen today along the four-mile course of the

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1 Acequia de Chamita, with the exception of the replacement of  
2 the earthen diversion dam by a concrete diversion, installation  
3 of relatively modern headgates and a change of the point of  
4 egress to a place on the Rio Grande rather than the Rio Chama;  
5 and

6 WHEREAS, site records of a survey completed by the state  
7 highway and transportation department in 1994 and another  
8 survey completed by the army corps of engineers in 1995, both  
9 note the historic importance of the Acequia de Chamita and  
10 recommend the acequia for inclusion on the national register of  
11 historic places; and

12 WHEREAS, the legal description of the location of the  
13 Acequia de Chamita is in the bylaws of the acequia, stating  
14 that the acequia "provides irrigation water from the Rio Chama  
15 for the communities of Chamita and San Juan Pueblo (once again  
16 called Ohkay Owingeh); and

17 WHEREAS, the four-hundred-nine-year history of the Acequia  
18 de Chamita places it as the oldest Euro-Arabic water management  
19 system still in use in the United States; and

20 WHEREAS, 2007 has been declared by Governor Bill  
21 Richardson to be the "year of water" and that will bring  
22 greater focus to protecting and insuring the survival of New  
23 Mexico's acequias;

24 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
25 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that recognition be

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1 given to the social, cultural, historic and ethno-hydraulic  
2 engineering importance of and the long-lived contribution to  
3 New Mexico of the Acequia de Chamita; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the house of representatives  
5 urge the cultural affairs department to place the Acequia de  
6 Chamita on the New Mexico register of cultural properties and  
7 further consider nominating the Acequia de Chamita for the  
8 national register of historic places; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
10 transmitted to Governor Bill Richardson, Governor Earl Salazar  
11 of Ohkay Owingeh, the secretary of cultural affairs, the  
12 acequia commission and the state and national register  
13 coordinator.

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